ABCs of...

@KO

www.us.army.mil

Army Knowledge Online

**By Staff Sgt. Dave Enders
and Sgt. 1st Class (Ret.) Phil Tegtmeier**

The Army Portal at Army Knowledge Online (AKO) offers NCOs a variety of ways to share information and access Web-based, customer-service programs in the areas of finance, personnel and health. The five most useful services available include AKO Mail, self-service areas, collaboration centers, AKO Chat and threaded discussions.

To help you make the most of what AKO offers, we've assembled a user's guide describing how to use those services to help NCOs perform their duties.

AKO Mail

The attraction of AKO Mail is the same as other Web-based e-mail accounts, according to Maj. C. J. Wallington, an AKO team leader. Wallington manages several teams of contractors who work on different aspects of AKO. Users can access their accounts from any computer that has an Internet hookup. And when you move, retire or go from active duty to Reserve duty, the AKO Mail address remains the same. Family members, civilian employees and contractors are also eligible for accounts.

"Eventually, AKO Mail will replace all other e-mail accounts," Wallington said. Installations and units will no longer maintain e-mail accounts at local levels, and AKO's planned global directory will allow users to find anyone in the Army family around the world.

Two updates to AKO e-mail services are underway, he said. In the first update, selected individuals worldwide are testing a version of Microsoft Outlook that will replace the current e-mail interface. The switch will allow users to share calendars, schedule meetings and track appointments. Users can access information while on temporary duty (TDY), deployment or leave. The second e-mail system under development is for AKO-S, the classified version of AKO available on secured networks. It will provide much the same features but will enable users to send and receive classified information.

Self-Service

When you log on to AKO, the home screen appears. This is a page you can personalize by selecting which windows you want to appear. Those windows include a variety of customizable windows grouping the available information services.

The Self-Service area contains a list of terms such as "My Personnel" and "My Finance." By clicking on one of those fields, you navigate to a Web page that has information relating to that specific area. A click on "My Finance," for example, brings up a page of finance-related frames like "My Pay" and finance-related messages. You can view your Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) online or download and print it, for example.

"AKO will be the user's standard desktop across the Army…whatever information users need, they will log onto AKO and reach it there," Wallington said. When you need to see how much your voucher is after TDY, you will find the information on your "My Finance" Web page accessed through the portal. The

same is true for assignment, health and dental readiness and educational information. By having the information available over a secure Web site like AKO, soldiers will spend less time on appointments to view their records or handle pay and personnel changes and have more time available for training, Wallington said.

Knowledge Collaboration Center

The Knowledge Collaboration Center (KCC), one of the newest AKO features, allows you to share documents. You can store up to 50KB in documents on the AKO server and access them while on TDY, deployments or even on leave. You can create group folders others can access and use to hold shared documents like unit packing lists, training schedules and policy letters.

Users can choose to view the documents on the Web or download them to local computers for later reference. *(Editor's note: The information appearing in this article, for example, comes largely from briefings we downloaded from the AKO staff's KCC.)*

AKO Chat

You can use the AKO Chat feature to take part in online conversations on hundreds of topics. AKO Chat uses Instant Messenger to keep you in touch in near-real time. Users can initiate a new chat room or visit an existing one to share ideas, opinions and information with others. The chat rooms are listed alphabetically, or you can search for specific users or topics. Members of the AKO Team do not "referee" the discussions, Wallington said. Users are expected to abide by the rules of common decency and can be held accountable if they violate regulations or policies. Using the chat rooms, users can share solutions to common problems or brainstorm with others. The site gives you the option of beginning a new chat room on a specific topic. Then users can schedule discussions in advance by coordinating a chat time with coworkers, mentors in your career field or others. Or you can join in an existing chat by selecting a room from the window that appears when you click on AKO Chat from the portal.

Threaded discussions

Threaded discussions differ from online chats. In discussions, you may enter a discussion on a topic, log off at any time and return to view the input of others during later sessions.

Discussions often branch off from central themes to sub-topics. You can follow the threads of multiple discussions by expanding and contracting discussion folders that appear on screen.

Some soldiers assigned to units in U.S. Army, Pacific (USARPAC) have used the site to post questions about proper wear and appearance of the uniform, for example. Web site managers in USARPAC also host a discussion thread where members of the command can make suggestions for improving command products and services. There are other ways to use the discussion areas. Some career field and functional area managers have discussion areas running. Soldiers have gone to the Criminal Investigation Command (CID) discussion area, for example, to ask about becoming CID agents.

Increasing the use of AKO is part of creating a cultural change that will eventually see soldiers relying on AKO for all of the information they need – even on tomorrow's battlefield, Wallington said. The number of agencies offering services through the portal will continue to increase over the next few years, he added.

Soldiers and other authorized users can begin tapping the resources available by logging on to AKO at http://www.us.army.mil and registering for access, Wallington said. There's a 10-minute tutorial available at the log-in page for those who want to learn more. You can also begin to navigate through the site and use the red "help" button to get assistance when you don't understand a certain feature. Experts are available at the AKO Help Desk around the clock. Help is also available offline by phone at DSN 654-3791 or toll-free at 1-877-256-8737.

@ako The Army Portal

Friday July 11, 2003

Sign In — Click Here
Sign In
Sign in with your username and password.

New User
Register for AKO
Eligibility: Active Army, Reserve, National Guard, DA Civilian, Retired Army, and Army guests.

AKO Help
Forgot your Password?
Contact the Help Desk
Take the AKO Tutorial
 ■ Text Version
 ■ Audio Version
Download the DoD Certificate
Privacy and Security Notice

2d BCT "Spartan" soldiers wait outside a building being raided during Operation Scorpion in Iraq during the pre-dawn hours. Photo by SPC Mason T. Lowery, 50th PAD.

NOTICE: This site uses a cookie to track user sessions. No personal information is stored on the cookie. Users who do not accept cookies may use the site, but some functionality will not be available.